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ABSTRACT

Because humans and nature are inextricable entities sharing a common global lifespace, natural and social environments are interactive and interdependent. There is a need to (1) understand the origins and characteristics of lifespace phenomena; (2) perceive man and Nature relationships; (3) respect Nature; (4) appreciate the beauty of one's surroundings; (5) commit one's self to preserving a quality lifespace; and (6) prevent rift between natural and social (human-made) environments. Thus it is important that K-12 curricula provide all students the opportunity to interact with, and study, the total lifespace in which they exist and function. This document provides and discusses ecosocial studies curriculum examples divided into urban, suburban, and rural environments. Each of these environments is further divided into thematic units on living space, open areas, cooperative living habitats, population density, goods and services, recreation, zoning, land use, transportation systems, natural resources, endangered species, environmental impact studies, or pollution. Examples of encounters for learning activities are provided for each thematic unit. (DK)

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E N V I R O N M E N T S

The Context of Our Lives

A SOCIAL STUDIES SCHEMA FOR GRADES 7-12

Richard Peters, Ed.D.

JUNE 1994

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HUMANS & ENVIRONMENT
LEARNING PROGRAM
(HELP)

FORWARD

Because HUMANS and NATURE are inextricable entities sharing a common global lifespace, natural and social environments are interactive and interdependent. Environmental phenomena, e.g., people, places, things and events, exist in a perpetual state of interlocking dependency.[1] (SEE DIAGRAM I)

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

No matter where an individual lives, e.g., city, town, village, or farm, he/she interacts with the lifespace surroundings every day. Thus, there is a need to 1) understand the origins and characteristics of lifespace phenomena, 2) perceive MAN and NATURE relationships, 3) respect NATURE, 4) appreciate the beauty of one's surroundings, 5) commit one's self to preserving a quality lifespace, and 6) prevent rift between natural and social (human-made) environments.

Thus, it is important that K-12 curricula provide ALL students the opportunity to interact with, and study, the total lifespace in which they exist and function.

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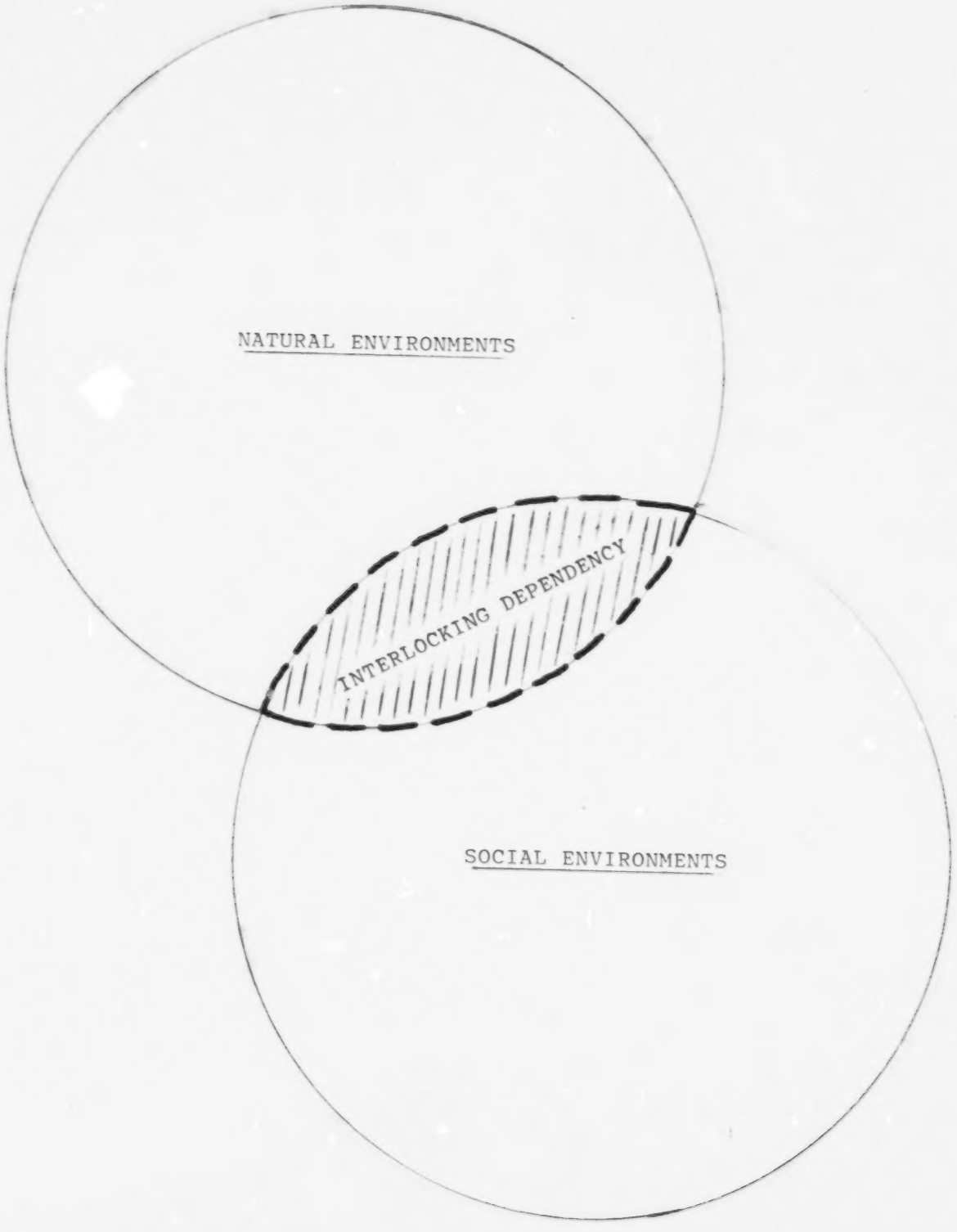
[1] "Nurturing an Environmental and Social Ethic," Childhood Education, Winter 1993/1994, p 72-73.

DIAGRAM I



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DEFINING ONE'S LIFESPACE

Each of us lives in a somewhat different, and unique, setting. In each of these settings, natural and social phenomena and related processes function and interact -- resulting in a variety of relationships and having different impacts upon our daily lives.

It is important for students to 1) understand the character and origins of the immediate lifespace, 2) perceive MAN/NATURE relationships, and 3) be aware of changing conditions/circumstances that constantly change MAN/NATURE relationships.

A K-12 social studies curriculum that focuses students' attention on lifespace environments -- both near and far-removed, prepares them for a lifetime of change and adaptation as they move from place-to-place and from unique lifespace to unique lifespace.

URBAN. As is true with all settings, an urban or inner city lifespace is characterized by the quantity and quality of natural and social phenomena to be found.

In urban settings, there will generally be more social phenomena and processes to observe and interact with that will be found natural settings and related phenomena. Thus, an urban ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES program would most-likely focus students' attention on MAN's creations and how lifespace phenomena interact. Those natural areas will be fewer in number than those found in rural regions -- and thus limited opportunities for interaction will be

afforded to inner city students.

Urban students can gain exposure to natural phenomena and to facilities containing flora and fauna that are not readily accessible to children and youths living in outlying regions, e.g., aquariums, aviaries, botanical gardens, and zoos.

Commons, parks, wooded areas, ponds and shorelines provide opportunities for urban students to conduct field-based studies, and to collect flora, rocks, and water samples for later studies in classrooms.

Art galleries and museums containing exhibits that depict nature sites and related phenomena can be incorporated into ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES units. Exposure to such works may inspire students to express their feelings about nature through various art forms. They also learn that art is a culture artifact -- depicting a lifestyle, value system, and perceptions of MAN/NATURE relationships.

SUBURBAN. Students living in suburban areas are close to urban complexes and to more-rural regions. ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES can blend urban/suburban/rural properties into a multi-grade study of MAN/NATURE relationships.

At times, attention may be paid to social settings. Thus, students can be introduced to/interact with

phenomena and processes found in the immediate lifespace and in the somewhat-distant urban complex.

When studying MAN/NATURE relationships, students can be introduced to natural settings that are nearby/close to home and to those found in the outlying rural areas.

While the typical urban ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES curriculum focus is on interaction with the social environment -- and with limited natural areas, in the suburban areas - students can interact with natural/social phenomena and related processes on a regular basis. For those occasions when students must travel to natural/social settings, a short field trip ride to urban or rural areas will provide opportunities for field-based studies in authentic surroundings.

RURAL. Typically, in rural areas ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES programs focus more attention on natural settings than do urban and suburban programs -- due to the nature of the lifespace.

Within short distances of the school, students can study NATURE in its habitat. Sometimes, the social settings may be somewhat limited, and students gain exposure to these phenomena through audiovisual presentations or rare field trips to urban areas.

THE MANY FACES OF ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES

As noted, the lifespace will determine the type of ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES program that students are directly involved in through the several grades.

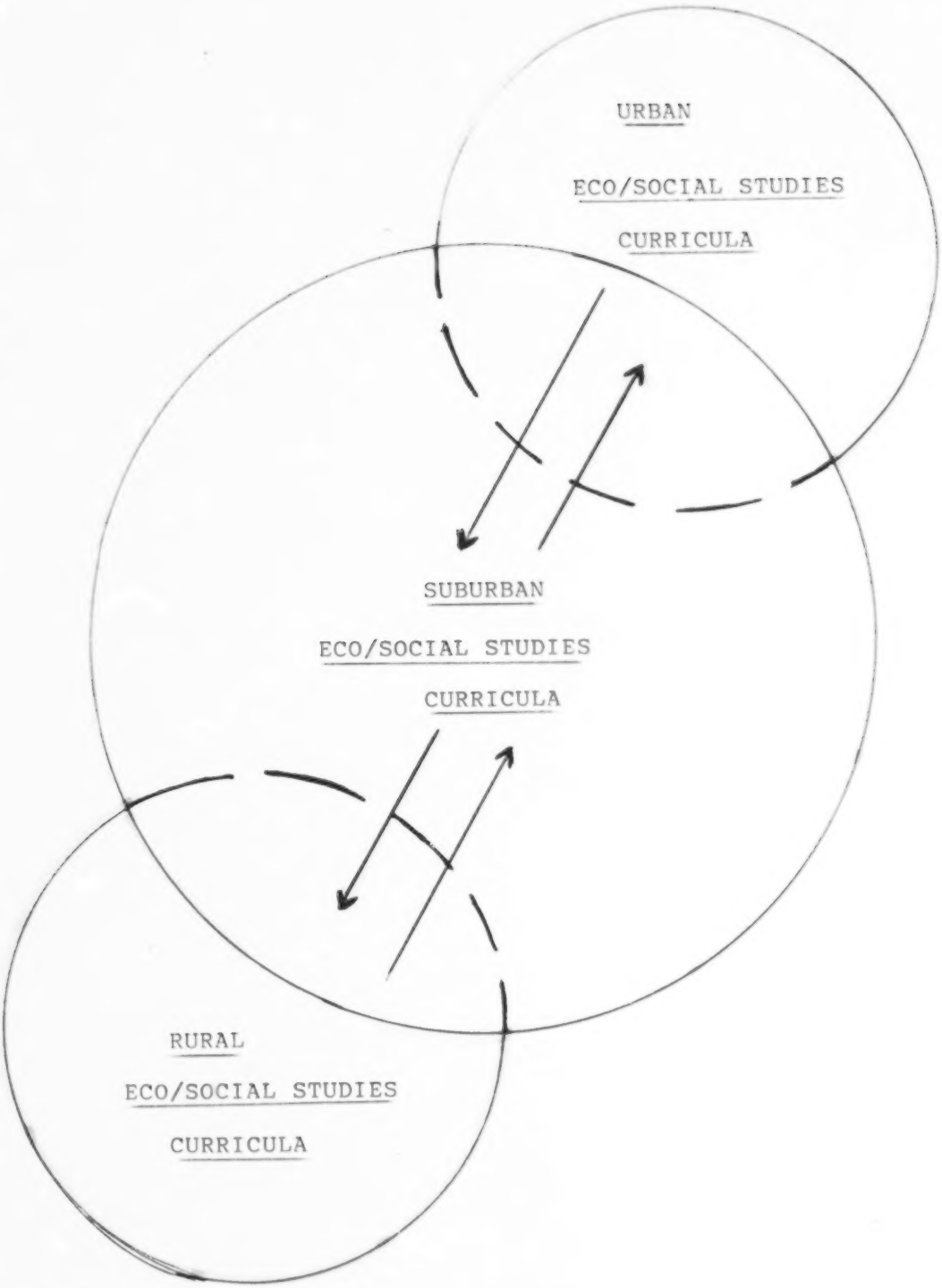
In areas where natural settings abound, social studies and science teachers plan learning encounter menus that provide students with ample opportunities to interact with phenomena and related processes. When social resources are available, encounters are designed to directly expose students to these settings as well.

In suburban areas, students can be exposed to MAN/NATURE relationships in urban - suburban - rural areas. Thus, ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES programs in suburban settings focus attention on MAN/NATURE interactions and interdependence.

Urban ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES programs focus more attention on social settings - with formal introduction to NATURE whenever possible. In the urban setting, ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES emphasize the social studies aspect of interrelationships and interdependence among people.

An ideal ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES program blends elements of natural and social settings into a multi-grade study of MAN/NATURE relationships. A model for such programs would most-likely be found in suburban schools. (SEE DIAGRAM II)

DIAGRAM II


URBAN
ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES
CURRICULA
SUBURBAN
ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES
CURRICULA
RURAL
ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES
CURRICULA

ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM EXAMPLES

URBAN ENVIRONMENTS (P 7 - 11)

SUBURBAN ENVIRONMENTS (P 12-16)

RURAL ENVIRONMENTS (P 17 - 22)

URBAN: THEMATIC UNITS

Living Space. Areas that can accommodate/support large numbers of people, e.g., apartment complexes, housing tracts, and high-rise structures.

Open Areas. Regions that are left untouched by MAN. These areas retain their natural characteristics, and are protected by enacted policies and prescribed practices.

Cooperative Living Habitats. MAN's constant effort(s) to balance the needs of the human population and NATURE in the urban setting. Attention is paid to policies and practices designed to protect the lifespace.

Population Density. Congestion/crowding in the urban setting, and related health/social problems. Attention is paid to the need for upgraded social services, e.g., clean water, clean air, living space, safe streets, and sanitation.

Goods and Services. Facilities and human resources that contribute to the production/creation of goods and services -- for consumption and use in the immediate lifespace and beyond.

Recreation. Facilities/space designated for leisure-time use as well as for organized play.

Pollution. Causes/effects of air-water-noise-sight pollution, waste disposal, chemical discharge, and air-borne viruses.

THEMATIC UNIT ENCOUNTERS (EXAMPLES)

Living Space:

- Students visit proposed housing construction sites to observe/ listen to plans to convert vacant lots, older structures, and/or open areas into living space.
- Students visit/observe on tape projects to reclaim damaged housing - to make it available for increasing numbers of people.

Open Areas:

- Students take nature walks through areas that have been set aside to accommodate natural processes.
- Students conduct field-based studies at natural settings in the lifespace.
- Students are taken to natural settings to encounter the surroundings through their senses. Students draw pictures, write poems, and record data on film or video tape.

Cooperative Living Habitats: • Students interview city officials to determine policies/practices regarding environmental protection. Reports are written/presented.

• Students tour the urban area and record evidence of cooperative living habitats on film/video tape.

Population Density: • Students research city records to determine the current population of the city, e.g., live births, deaths, emigration, and immigration.

• Using city maps, students identify population congestion and determine the density of city regions. Reports are developed/presented.

Goods and Services: • Students tour urban sites/ facilities to witness production processes and marketing techniques.

• Students interview individuals who own/operate service businesses.

Recreation:

- Students participate in leisure-time activities and organized play at urban sites.
- Students tour housing projects, schools, and YMCA/YWCA facilities to learn more about recreational opportunities for the urban youths.

Pollution:

- Students tour the urban setting for purposes of identifying/studying pollution causes/effects. Reports are developed/presented.
- Students conduct historical studies to determine causes/effects of pollution (in the urban area). Reports are developed/presented.

SUBURBAN: THEMATIC UNITS

Living Space. Areas that can accommodate/support large numbers of people, e.g., apartment complexes, housing tracts, and high-rise structures.

Open Areas. Regions that are left untouched by MAN. These areas retain their natural characteristics, and are protected by enacted policies and prescribed practices.

Cooperative Living Habitats. MAN's constant effort(s) to balance the needs of the human population and NATURE in the suburban setting. Attention is paid to policies and practices designed to protect the lifespace.

Zoning/Land Use. Policies/practices that determine land use in the suburban setting, e.g., the types of structures, how open space has to be incorporated into housing tracts, and what kinds/types of commerce can be undertaken in certain places.

Transportation Systems. Machines and routes designed to move large numbers of people quickly/rapidly from place-to-place, e.g., subways, monorails, trains, taxis, buses, and highways (I75).

Goods and Services. Facilities and human resources that contribute to the production/creation of goods and services -- for consumption and use in the immediate lifespace and beyond.

Recreation. Facilities/space designated for leisure-time use as well as for organized play.

Pollution. Causes/effects of air-water-noise-sight pollution, waste disposal, chemical discharge, and air-borne viruses.

THEMATIC UNIT ENCOUNTERS (EXAMPLES)

Living Space:

- Students investigate reports of population increase in the community -- interviews with community officials, businesses, and construction companies.
- Students tour the community to observe construction activities.

Open Areas:

- Students are taken on guided tours of natural settings in the community.
- Students conduct field-based studies in natural settings.

Cooperative Living Habitats:

- Students tour the community to find evidence of MAN/NATURE harmony. Evidence is recorded on film/tape. Reports are developed/presented.
- Students design bulletin board displays depicting community harmony.

Zoning/Land Use:

- Students study maps of the community todetermine how the area is zoned.
- Students tour the community to record on-film/video tape evidence of zoning violations.

Transportation Systems:

- Students view films/video tapes that depict systems nationwide, and on a global scale.
- Students study maps of the community to determine highway systems. Reports are developed/presented.

Goods and Services:

- Students tour community sites and observe production processes. Reports are developed/presented.
- Students visit catering services and observe business-related activities/processes.

Recreation:
- Students take walking tours to identify/study recreational facilities in the community.
- Students investigate summer recreational programs offered by community groups/agencies for children/youths/adults. Reports are developed/presented.

Pollution:
- Students study the community to determine pollution causes and effects. Reports are developed/presented.
- Students study the effects of urban/rural pollution on the suburban community.

RURAL: THEMATIC UNITS

Living Space. Areas that can accommodate/support large numbers of people.

Open Areas. Regions that are left untouched by MAN. These areas retain their natural characteristics, and are protected by enacted policies and prescribed practices.

Cooperative Living Habitats. MAN's constant effort(s) to balance the needs of the human population and NATURE in the rural setting. Attention is paid to policies and practices designed to protect the lifespace.

Natural Resources. Flora, fauna, minerals, timber, waterways, etc. used by MAN to produce goods and services, and to maintain a sound economy in the community/area/region.

Goods and Services. Facilities and human resources that contribute to the production/creation of goods and services -- for consumption and use in the immediate lifespace and beyond.

Pollution. Causes/effects of MAN-made and NATURE's pollution in the rural setting.

Recreation. Facilities/space designated for leisure-time use as well as for organized play.

Endangered Species. Flora and fauna whose numbers are being reduced, and whose future existence is in doubt.

Environmental Impact Studies. Research/studies conducted prior to planned actions to determine the effect(s) of MAN's intrusion upon NATURE (phenomena and processes).

THEMATIC UNIT ENCOUNTERS (EXAMPLES)

Living Space:

- Students tour the community/ surrounding area to map features, e.g., wooded regions, pastures and other open spaces, hills and mountains, bodies of water, social environment artifacts, and marshes/wetlands. Bulletin board displays are created.
- Students study the population of selected animals, e.g., deer, moose, elk, in the region and identify food sources/supplies, water supplies, shelter. Reports are developed/presented.

Open Areas:

- Students study maps of the region to determine areas set aside for wildlife and natural processes.
- Students study how modern home construction planning takes into consideration the natural surroundings. Landscaping, maintaining open areas, preserving wooded regions, etc. are studied.

Cooperative Living Habitats:

- Students study reforestation practices in the region.
- Students observe and study water reclamation projects in the region.

Natural Resources:

- Students discuss the conservation and management of natural resources with guest speakers and tour guides.
- Students research the economic history of the community/region re: the exploitation/management of natural resources.

Goods and Services:

- Students tour manufacturing sites in the region to observe processes and the use of natural resources.
- Students study the types of human services provided by the local/regional government(s). Reports are developed/ presented.

Pollution:

- Students study the causes/effects of MAN-made and natural pollution in the community/region.

- Students interview elected officials, business representatives, conservation officials, community residents, and environmental activists to better understand the causes/effects of pollution in the community/region. Reports are developed/presented.

Recreation:

- Students study the current availability of recreational facilities to community residents. Reports are developed/presented.

- Students design recreational facilities/areas and present their plans to local government bodies/officials.

Endangered Species:

- Students tour natural sites in the community/region and observe flora/fauna that are endangered. Guides provide data and reports

are developed/presented.

- Students view films/video tapes that depict the plight of endangered species --- nationally and globally.

Environmental Impact Studies:

- Students tour sites where EISs are being conducted. They observe the process and develop reports.

- Students attend EIS hearings and meetings to observe the process. Reports are developed/presented.

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HUMANS, NATURE, PLACES, AND THINGS: AN ECO/SOCIAL STUDIES VIEW OF THE WORLD. ED 363 559 1994

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"Museum, Farm or Factory," THE MAINE TEACHER, May 1969, p 32.

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"Discovering Nature in the Urban Environment," SCHOOLS IN THE MIDDLE (September or November 1994)

ENVIRONS. ERIC

UNDERSTANDING ENVIRONMENTAL RIFT. ERIC

Nurturing an Environmental and Social Ethic

Richard Peters

Because we live in a global age . . . today's children must begin to comprehend the character and complexity of the global community.

A decade ago, the International Activities Committee of the National Council for the Social Studies declared that technological advances, increased trade, tourism and cultural exchanges, environmental concerns, market competition and scarce resources will draw nations into increasingly complex relationships. The day-to-day lives of people in all nations will be influenced by increased cross-cultural links, as well. Individuals will be required to understand and interact with peoples, cultures, languages, lifestyles and value systems that differ from their own.

Because we live in a global age, existing simultaneously within the context of several interrelated and interactive real world environments, today's children must begin to comprehend the character and complexity of the global community. They will need this knowledge in order to become effective citizens of the 21st century.

Because *humans* and *nature* are inextricable entities sharing a common global lifespace, natural and social (human-made) environments are interactive and interdependent. This interconnection is necessary for the prosperity of the various species. Environmental phenomena (e.g., people, places, things and events) exist in a perpetual state of interlocking dependency.

Humans constantly intrude upon nature. In order to successfully live in natural and social worlds, humans must understand the origins, composition, characteristics and life-sustaining processes of these worlds.

Children's attention should be focused on the diversity of natural and social settings, those close to home as well as far-removed. During the course of a typical school day, they should be provided ample opportunities to interact with, and learn from, natural and social phenomena. To isolate children from the lifespace environment of the local community, and the world-at-large, is to diminish the relevance of formal education in their daily lives.

Children need to acquire a social ethic that:

- develops their awareness of the natural and social worlds around them
- informs them about past and present conflicts, issues and situations related to natural and social environments, cultures and ethnic groups
- allows them to have empathy for the plights of nature and diverse cultures and ethnic groups
- helps them to understand the character of diverse natural

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and social environments both close to home and far-removed
- enables them to exhibit, through proactive involvement, attitudes and opinions about ecology-related and social environment-related issues in contemporary life
- helps them to perceive and understand relationships between humans and nature
- helps them understand relationships among cultures and ethnic groups
- allows them to recognize the differences and similarities among diverse cultures.

Today, as in the past, the place of humans in the world is to coexist with nature and other peoples. Action must be taken in our schools today to help tomorrow's global citizens think and act in responsible ways to 1) clean-up natural and social environments, 2) establish and enforce policies and programs that guarantee the maintenance of a quality global lifespace and 3) educate a *nature sensitive* and *culture literate* citizenry.

A natural/physical and social science-fused curriculum that is continuous (K-12) integrated (interdisciplinary) and sequential (developmental) can be designed to introduce students to:

- the effect(s) that personal/group decisions and actions have on others and themselves
- the need to take responsibility for protecting living things that are dependent upon humans for their survival
- the creation of an environmental ethic
- the character of natural and social environments
- an understanding of the impact humans have had/are having upon the total lifespace environment
- an understanding of the impact nature has had/is having upon human lifestyles, cultures and value systems
- an awareness of community service activities that will promote participatory citizenship and decision-making
- the need for a stewardship attitude regarding the conservation and management of natural and human/social resources
- the development of social attitudes, behavior patterns and values
- the concept of perceptual self-denial through everyday living
- the problems and situations affecting natural and social environments—and related phenomena
- the differing personal styles of working actively for conflict-resolution and problem-solving.

Humans and nature lead a common existence on earth. What is the role of humans in nature? How do we, as individuals, fit into established culture patterns and social schemes? Each generation of the human species must ask these questions. Each generation of the human species must find its place in the global biosphere. How we answer these questions, and how we choose to act upon those answers, will determine the inevitable fate of humans and nature on earth—in the 21st century and beyond.

Focusing on Participatory Citizenship

The goals of AMERICA 2000 guide parents, business leaders, and communities-at-large in creating educational programs that will help today's students.

by Richard Peters

All across this nation, local communities and state governments are designing plans to enhance the readiness of children and youth for 21st century living.

Using AMERICA 2000 goals as a guide, concerned parents, business leaders, elected officials, and communities-at-large are creating educational programs that will help today's students function as productive citizens in tomorrow's world.

> Citizenship is not a course, but a learned way of living.

AMERICA 2000's Goal III focuses on the need for students to use their minds well, so they are prepared for responsible citizenship. According to the National Education Goals Panel (1992), community service is an area of individual preparation often times not planned for in the typical curriculum.

While Austin's PROJECT A+ program emphasizes young adults being able to demonstrate social responsibility and active involvement in community service, most secondary curricula do not set such lofty goals. Too often, it is believed that good citizens happen as a result of a study of national/state history and national/state government. Knowing how a bill becomes law and how the President of the United States is elected does *not* guarantee that students will become productive members of the society and proactive citizens. Something more is needed!

Participatory Citizenship

What is needed in the school curriculum, are ample opportunities for all students to acquire and apply citizenship skills both in the classroom and within the community.

Students need involvement with citizenship skills development in all subjects – not just in social studies classes! Thus, there is a need for teacher teams to design activities and experiences that will insure that students practice good citizenship everyday – all the time. Good citizenship should be perceived, by students, as something that permeates their lives – and not something to be discussed in history or government classes. Citizenship should be defined as actions and not as the discussion of abstract theories!

Students need exposure to conflicts, issues, problems, and situations that have both immediate and long-range impact upon the lives of individuals and groups.

Students cannot remain passive onlookers in the game of everyday living. They must be trained in active involvement with processes that require commitment and individual responsibility to the betterment of the state of human affairs. They must be able and willing to right wrongs, to make critical decisions and sacrifices and contribute to the solution of perplexing social problems.

A Plan of Action

Beginning in the lower elementary grades, children need to participate in activities that focus their attention and development skills on social issues that directly affect them. They need exposure to the community-at-large and to everyday living.

By the middle school years, children and youth have become acquainted with real life situations that require action on the part of concerned citizens. They participate in community-oriented activities that require them to work cooperatively with others.

In high school, youths are involved in activities that build upon earlier experiences, and that require them to apply acquired knowledge and skills to perceived situations. For example:

- participate in community/school clean-up campaigns;
- get out the vote by baby-sitting, going door-to-door reminding individuals to vote, and driving voters to the polls;
- volunteer energy and time to peer tutoring in school, and helping adults learn to read at community centers;
- serve as BIG BROTHERS/ BIG SISTERS;
- man a crisis hotline telephone;
- write a column in the local newspaper;
- work in a hospital;
- communicate with local/area/state/national elected officials on matters of concern and interest;
- participate in walk-a-thons and bike-a-thons;
- be an advocate for some social action; and
- organize community awareness programs.

The products of PARTICIPATORY CITIZENSHIP programs are proactive individuals who act for the betterment of the group. They accept responsibility for personal behavior, and conduct themselves within the framework of the law.

Citizenship is not a course! It is not an academic exercise but rather a learned way-of-living! Citizenship skills can only be acquired and honed by actually participating in activities, both in the school and community, that require commitment, reasoned thought, and action.

Continued

Richard Peters is professor of Education, Corpus Christi State University.

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Citizenship ...

Working with community resource people, teachers can design a curriculum that provides for both subject matter-related activities and extra-curricular projects. Site-based management teams should engage the concerns and expertise of individuals and groups that function within the community. Community resource sites can become citizenship skills training 'classrooms' – as students participate in activities related to real life challenges. Such activities can enhance critical thinking, decision-making, and problem solving skills among high school students.

ECOnauts

An example of citizenship training might involve students in activities designed to enhance the quality of the environment of the local community.

As defined by this author, ECOnauts are explorers of the world(s) around them. They are researching scientists who interact with natural and social phenomena.

These nature-sensitive individuals are aware of the natural world around them; are informed about past and present conflicts, issues, problems, and situations related to natural environments; have empathy for the plight of nature – locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally; understand the characters of diverse natural environments that are nearby/close-to-home and distant/far-removed; have developed attitudes and opinions about ecology-related issues in contemporary life; perceive relationships between humans and nature; and are committed to pro-active action.

In classrooms, students would be involved in teacher team-planned activities that focus attention on conflicts, issues, problems, and situations that require citizen action.

As extra-curricular activities, ECOnaut club members would be involved in community service projects. Working with community resource people, club advisors design projects that enable students to demonstrate the ability to reason, to apply knowledge, and to solve problems.

Being a good citizen is a lifelong process involving skills development and application everyday of our lives! Citizenship is not part of the curriculum – it is the essence of the curriculum!

Introducing Students to the Global Community

Want to involve students in the discovery of different cultures and environments? The SAGE strategy may be just what you're looking for

BY RICHARD PETERS

According to the National Council for the Social Studies, the day-to-day lives of average citizens are being influenced by our growing international, cross-cultural links. In its 1981 *Global Education Position Statement*, NCSS stated that the phenomenon of globalization is evident by increased interaction between societies, resulting in a global culture; and an expanding global consciousness which enhances our identities as members of the human species and as inhabitants of the planet Earth.

Children must clearly understand that every living thing on earth—whether it is found in the skies, on the ground or beneath the seas—exists within the context of a system of interlocking dependency. Whatever happens to one entity affects all other entities in the system.

By fusing elements of environmental education and culture studies with existing curricula, instructional programs can introduce children to eco/social issues and problems of global concern and magnitude. We must not only prepare children for induction into today's world; we must also provide them with the knowledge and skills they need if they are to function successfully in the global society of the 21st Century.

The Student Awareness of Global Environments (SAGE) strategy is designed to do just that. It can be used to involve students directly in the discovery of new and different cultures and physical environments on a global scale.

The SAGE strategy is essentially a flexible approach to gathering and displaying information about other cultures and environments. Students conduct research, collect data, work cooperatively in small

Figure 1 Culture Traits

CULTURES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A								
B								
C								
D								

1. Dwelling
2. Clothing/Accoutrements
3. Shelter
4. Education
5. Family structures/Status
6. Recreation/Leisure
7. Government
8. Division of labor

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Figure 2

Environmental Characteristics

REGION(S)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Coastal Plains						
Deserts						
Mountains						
Rain Forests						
Interior Plains						
Polar Zones						
Jungles						

1. Flora (vegetation) 2. Fauna (wildlife) 3. Weather (seasons) 4. Temperature(s) 5. Rainfall 6. Natural resources

groups, make decisions and share information with the entire class.

Culture traits. A third grade class of 20 students can, for example, be divided into four research teams. Each team is responsible for collecting data relevant to its specific culture. Sometimes the students themselves assign research projects to the teams; sometimes teachers and/or community resource people help the students. It all depends on the sophistication and background of the students and, of course, the nature of the research.

Data is collected on cardboard cards and attached to the flannelboard matrix (see Figure 1) with Velcro. The students do not need to put a great deal of information on the cards. A brief summary or outline will do, as long as it provides other students with the basic facts. When data cards from all four groups have been attached to the matrix board, students visually compare and discuss cultures A-D.

Environmental characteristics. Just as important as learning about diverse cultures is learning about diverse natural environments and their effects upon cultural development throughout the world.

A fourth grade class of 21 students can be divided into seven research teams. Each team is responsible for gathering data about the environment in a given geographical region. The students collect and discuss the information just as they did when researching culture traits. When data cards from all seven groups have been attached to the matrix board (see Figure 2), students visually compare and discuss the regions studied.

Figures 1 and 2 are, by the way, simply suggestions as to what the matrixes might look like. You might choose to have a different number of teams and more or less culture traits and environmental characteristics.

Cultures and nature. Data on culture traits and environmental characteristics can be combined in the study of how nature affects human cultures, and in the study of ways by which human groups have had negative and positive effects upon natural environments.

Whether students are taken out into the community or community resource people are brought into the classroom, the important thing to have happen when students are studying diverse cultures and global natural environments is that they begin to relate their immediate surroundings and lifestyles to other cultures and regions of the earth.

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